3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

[p. xliii]

FOREWORD

The United States, embarked upon a policy of good neighborliness toward the other countries of the Western Hemisphere, is beginning to improve its acquaintance with the republics to the south. Most of its efforts at present are directed toward an understanding of the large and important powers, such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, which, because of their size and resources, are potentially our greatest allies—or, if we fail in our policies, our sources of greatest danger. There are, however, twenty republics to the south of us, many of them small. A truly good neighbor does not ignore near-by families who are lacking in wealth, even those who are known to differ among themselves.

Of the twenty Latin-American republics, the second smallest is Haiti. The United States was only twenty years old when the people of this little country (which, for all its diminutive size, had been France's wealthiest colony of the eighteenth century) fought their own war of independence, and in 1804 founded the second free state in the hemisphere. Haiti has many claims upon the attention of the United States: its war against France in 1802–3 was at least a contributing factor in Napoleon's willingness to sell Louisiana to this country; it was the first independent Negro state in the modern world; its foreign policy has long been intertwined with our own; finally, the nineteen-year American Occupation of the country has brought us into an even closer relationship with Haiti than independent factors could produce.

When the country was young there was a spate of books trying to answer the question whether a nation ruled by blacks could long endure. In more recent years, works on the Antillean republic have generally dealt with single phases of its life, as for example its political relations with the United States, or its "Voodoo" practices. There is, however, no connected story of the growth of its social institutions out of the backgrounds of slavery and French colonial life, or of the slow shaping of these institutions through the nineteenth century. It is this growth which the present volume undertakes to describe. Political history has been introduced only so far as necessary to provide the convenient pegs upon which most of us are accus-

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 to Toussaint if Saint-Domingue had been merely a colony like
648 Martinique, and not the single centre from which measures for
rebuilding the French colonial system could radiate. France was once
669 more taking over Louisiana from Spain; but before Bonaparte could
effectively reach Louisiana to establish his New World empire, he
must make sure of Saint-Domingue. The very real power of Tous-
saint had to be crushed, and through the whole of 1801 Napoleon
was making preparations for the annihilation of the black governor."

175 The plans were as follows: to send his brother-in-law, Leclerc,
648 with a formidable French army to "succeed" Toussaint as governor;
721 to try to persuade the blacks that the new régime was entirely
benevolent to their race, so that no armed resistance would be
offered; if persuasion and diplomacy failed, to fight and conquer the
Negroes, subduing them once more to slavery; and, above all, to
capture Toussaint with all his black counselors and send them as
prisoners to France. Napoleon undertook to prepare the way for
Leclerc by writing personally to Toussaint: "Assist the Captain-
General [Leclerc] with your counsels, your influence, and your
talents. What can you desire?—the liberty of the blacks? You know
that in all the countries where we have been, we have given it to the
people who had it not." He repeated this assurance in his message a
week later to the French legislature (November 22, 1801): "At
Saint-Domingue and at Guadeloupe there are no more slaves. All are
free there; all will remain free." Still further, the proclamation he
drew up for Leclerc to publish upon his arrival, as a reassurance to
the blacks, ran: "If you are told that these forces are destined to
ravish your liberty, answer: The Republic has given us liberty, the
Republic will not suffer it to be taken from us!"

Leclerc with his army arrived at Cap Français late in January, 1802.
He hoped to be received at the capital as a friend, but Christophe,
the black general in charge of the city, repulsed his advances. Leclerc
was obliged to attack; on February 5 Christophe set fire to the city
and withdrew to the neighboring hills. The war of independence
had begun.

19. The part played by Toussaint for a brief moment in the history of the United States is full of significance. Certain historians are of the opinion that if Napoleon had been successful in the reconquest of Saint-Domingue he would have turned his attention to America rather than to Europe, for he had great colonial schemes. His failure in the colony, according to this theory, made him try to withdraw gracefully from the New World by selling Louisiana to the United States.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 master's good usage must re-attach them to his rule. When they shall have
648 felt by comparison the difference between a usurping and tyrannical yoke
727 [apparently he means such a yoke as Toussaint's] and that of the legitimate
567 proprietor interested in their preservation, then the moment will have arrived for making them return to their original condition, from which it was so disastrous to draw them.

175 The plan to reëstablish slavery, however, was never carried out,
648 nor was its scheduled sequel, the occupation of Louisiana. The French
727 soldiers in Saint-Domingue began to succumb to an invisible assailant —yellow fever. The first French army of 17,000 men had been largely consumed in the task of conquering Toussaint's armies; the second was now being swept away by disease. Leclerc's letters to Napoleon pleading for reinforcements soon became frantic in their despair. Fever was weakening the army at the very moment when rumors of impending reënslavement were strengthening the number of active antagonists to the French. The black generals who had deserted Toussaint for Leclerc now swung back again to the opposition. Then Leclerc himself fell ill of the fever. Apparently all-conquering in June, 1802, by November he was dead.

175 This was the turning point in Napoleon's whole American policy.
727 The war had ruined Saint-Domingue economically; it had destroyed
721 plantations, paralyzed labor, and reduced the population to bar-
648 barism. To resume the conquest would have cost France heavily; the army dreaded service in a region where death was almost certain; the financial expense had been frightful: one year of war had consumed 50,000 men and several million dollars, yet at least as many men and as much money would still be needed before any return could be expected. Consequently, Napoleon decided to withdraw from his whole American experiment, saving face as far as possible. He appointed the brave but incompetent Rochambeau to succeed Leclerc, promised him reënforcements—and then broke the Peace of Amiens, so that France became embroiled in a European war. Affairs in Saint-Domingue (including the troops promised to Rochambeau) were conveniently forgotten after March, 1803; and the whole Louisiana territory was sold to the United States.

175 The end of French control in Saint-Domingue came shortly.
648 Rochambeau, as well as he could, waged desultory warfare, hanging, shooting, drowning, burning all the Negroes he could catch; hunting them with fifteen hundred bloodhounds bought in Jamaica for more

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 beside other ex-slaves was too evident to avert ridicule, which
643 Dessalines quickly noted. Few opportunities escaped the Emperor,
563 therefore, of making the light-skinned Haitians quake in their boots.
661 He wrote to Pétion (August 24, 1804), leader of the colored people, that in his slaughter of white Frenchmen he had often been "unable" to distinguish between whites and light-colored Haitians. Pétion and his friends knew that Dessalines did not regret his inability to make the distinction.[7]

175 Possibly Dessalines was clear-sighted enough to realize that the old
563 distinctions of color, if allowed to continue in the new state as in-
643 dicative of social prestige, might cause endless strife within the nation. Possibly, on the other hand, he wished to make the lighter-skinned Haitians realize that he, a Negro, was more than their equal. Whatever his underlying motives, he was impatient with the struggle for prestige. The steps he took to eradicate distinctions based upon color were characterized by his usual blunt tactlessness. In 1805 he informed Pétion, the outstanding mulatto general, that a union of black and colored people was essential to the happiness of the Empire; he said he wanted the Haitian people to become *bronzed* by this union, so that there would be no longer any important difference of skin color. All this was preface to a proposal that Pétion, as the ablest of the mulattoes, should marry the Emperor's black daughter, Célimène. Pétion, refined, highly educated, and gently cynical, was considerably perturbed and frankly embarrassed by the suddenness of this radical suggestion. His reply, that he was not inclined to marry at all, offended Dessalines and made him suspect a slight, but he dismissed Pétion with the pointed suggestion that he "think the matter over." Pétion knew, as the Emperor did not, that one of his aides-de-camp, Chancy, was not only in love with Célimène but had already got her with child. It is entirely possible, too, that he was aware of the growing underground opposition to Dessalines and that, as the Emperor's star was beginning to decline, he did not wish

[721] 7. It must be said to the credit of the black masses that they did not relish the systematic slaughter of the whites which so pleased Dessalines. Negro cultivators frequently collected potential victims, hiding them and aiding their escape from the country. The repugnance of the masses for such massacre was so evident that their generals had at times to drive them at bayonet's point. "The blacks of the plain behaved very well," said an exile in a letter (June 1, 1804) written from Jamaica to Moreau de Saint-Méry. Madiou says that after the massacre of the whites some Haitian blacks abandoned their country and went to join former masters in a foreign land.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

their new status was definitely higher. Mild serfdom might be thought of as the first intermediate step toward freedom. Democracy was still far off, there being no real middle class upon which to build it. Only the artisans of the towns and the ex-soldiers or the cultivators who had managed to lease small estates could be considered middle class. Christophe forced every dweller in villages or towns to have a manual skill. The only alternative was field work on a plantation.

The "aristocrats" of the kingdom were prevailingly black rather than colored. It was not to be expected that a vain man would soon forget the trick by which the mulattoes had frustrated him in his expectation of becoming the ruler of all Haiti. To say that the intermittent civil war between Christophe's kingdom of the North and Pétion's republic of the South was a struggle between blacks and colored people would not do great violence to the essential truth. Christophe's suspicion of gens de couleur was so well known that few were surprised at the high death rate of mulatto generals in the North. The murder of General Clervaux was definitely laid at Christophe's door.

The fact remains that among the nobility were men of all degrees of color. The King liked to say that he neither accepted nor yet took exception to the color of a man's epidermis—that in this matter he was *vert* (green), which is to say, neutral and indifferent. When he was angry his wrath fell indiscriminately upon the offender of whatever complexion. Similarly, when he found a light-skinned man who faithfully supervised a leased estate, thus proving his loyalty, the man was rewarded and promoted. Nevertheless, an underlying prejudice remained in his breast, bursting out occasionally at crises, and having ultimately a serious effect upon the loyalty of many of his people. When some of his subjects, enticed by the easy-going régime of the South, ran away to Pétion's republic, Christophe was angry enough to renew the war against Pétion (1811). The South won the encounter, thereby adding fuel to Christophe's rage. Three hundred prisoners he had captured he ordered tortured, and the angry King abused and insulted his own officers and executed several soldiers for having lost the battle. These actions caused more defections, renewed punishments, and a more abiding rancor. As one writer put it, the King "now regarded the mulattoes with a hatred so deep and fiendlike, that nothing would satisfy the direness of his

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

vengeance but the utter extermination of that race."[12] He even ordered the execution of a mulatto woman in Gonaïves because she had prayed for the success of Pétion.

During the latter years of his reign his personal popularity waned somewhat, owing to his relentless insistence upon efficiency and to his increasing tendency to lose his temper. Defections to the South occurred almost daily. The cultivators, comparing their never-ceasing toil on Northern plantations with the reported liberty and leisure of life in the South, continually drifted away. So alluring was the paradise of ease (and poverty) of the neighboring realm that Christophe found it necessary to keep a cordon of soldiers along the borders of his kingdom to prevent desertions. His administration now embarked on actual persecution of colored people. Inflammatory pamphlets were spread abroad, designed to make the Negroes think that the mulattoes were planning to enslave them once again. Under this campaign of propaganda many light-skinned Northerners had to go into hiding.

Despite all discrimination, the important line was drawn between cultivators who formed nine tenths of the population, and aristocrats who, with the army, made up the remainder. The nobility, the directors of landed estates, and the generals directed the activities of other people, so that the colonial prejudice against manual labor was strengthened. Here lay the basis of a persistent Haitian attitude of mind: to work with one's hands is to show oneself a member of the masses; to direct others is the distinction of the upper class. Education, neglected under Dessalines altogether, was fostered by Christophe. He established a few schools, inviting as schoolmasters certain Englishmen familiar with the then popular methods of the Lancasterian system; but since the cultivators were busy on the plantations, only the children of aristocrats benefited by the limited educational system and the social distance between classes was increased.

A French commentator says that Christophe showed unusual insight in devising for his kingdom "the only organization of which an African society was capable," namely, a combination of military despotism with certain benevolent inclinations, and territorial feudalism based upon a nobility created by the King. Actually, it suited not so much the African background of the people, which lay

12. Dr. Jonathan Brown, *The History and Present Condition of St. Domingo* (Philadelphia, 1837), II, 197.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

175 643 [625] Suddenly, without warning, he reversed what had been mistaken for docile inactivity, and assumed complete personal command of the reins of office. By means of a well-organized body of secret police, he inspired his own counselors with fear not only for their positions but for their lives. Although illiterate, Soulouque never signed a bill presented to him by his ministers until he was sure he knew its essential core. The hopeful "understudies" were forcibly awakened to the realization that they were hoist on their own petard.

175 643 563 669 The colored element was particularly apprehensive at Soulouque's amazing activity, for the President was clearly setting himself against their group, both in the cabinet and out. Determining clandestinely to get rid of their puppet before he became a Frankenstein's monster to destroy his creators, they fomented a new revolution. This, however, proved to be a strategic error of the first magnitude, for the President was already much stronger than they imagined. The insurrection was quashed with massacre and attendant frightfulness. In the aftermath, as Bouron mordantly remarks, "the republic was calm—with all the tranquillity of a tomb!" By their ineptitude, the colored group had now made themselves completely insecure.

175 565 643 642 [555] In the second year of his régime Soulouque decided to imitate Dessalines by turning the state into an empire. His coronation was extremely gaudy, as well as expensive. Calling himself Emperor Faustin I, he created a peerage drawn chiefly from among his black generals—four princes, fifty-nine dukes, and numerous counts, barons, and knights. This was merely outward pomp to gratify their craving for prestige, for they had no functions to perform, nor even the necessity of Christophe's peers to pay for their regalia. As nobles they were given no responsibilities in directing economic activity nor any increased political power over districts of the empire. The Emperor's own vanity was flattered by having a peerage. He ruled as an autocrat with blatant despotism. For ten years following the coronation Haiti had to accustom itself to costly expeditions against the Dominican Republic, nearly all ending in defeat for Haiti. The outcome of these intermittent wars was neither gain nor loss of territory by either side, but only temporary rule of occupied districts. Haiti likewise had to accustom itself to sudden executions, to the shabby grandeur of court display, and to financial trickery which would not have deceived a schoolboy. While the heads of his opponents and even his loyal counselors fell, Soulouque's infantile "empire" followed to economic ruin.

175 643 721 648 728